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*With the kind regards of
The Author*

LIGHT IN DARKNESS :

*Good to see
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A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN THE

Reformed Dutch Church,

STAPLETON, S. I.,

ON THANKSGIVING DAY,

November 27, 1862,

BY

THOMAS H. SKINNER, Jr.



GAZETTE PRINT, STAPLETON, S. I.

1862.

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STAPLETON, Dec. 1, 1862.

REV. THOS. H. SKINNER, JR. :

DEAR SIR: The undersigned listened to your Thanksgiving Discourse with pleasure and profit, and are persuaded that the truths which it sets forth should be put into a permanent form and receive wider circulation. Nothing is more important than that the minds and hearts of men should be established in the truth of God's Word in its bearing upon the tremendous crisis through which our nation is now passing: we therefore earnestly request that you will furnish a copy of said discourse for publication.

Yours respectfully,

J. H. SINCLAIR,

JOHN D. DIX,

E. A. LUDLOW,

WM. SHAW,

T. C. MOFFAT,

JOHN BONNER,

F. A. LANE,

R. L. ALLEN.

STAPLETON, Dec. 3, 1862.

Messrs. T. C. MOFFAT, J. BONNER, and others :

GENTLEMEN: I comply with your request for a copy of the discourse to which you refer.

Sincerely yours,

THOS. H. SKINNER, JR.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

THOU, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.—Ps. lxxi. 20.

Under the pressure of a most terrible and portentous judgment, the Chief Magistrate of the Commonwealth has appointed a Day of Thanksgiving to the Most High. The appointment is not unseasonable. Though dark and dense clouds are hovering over us, yet they are clouds in day-time; the light of Divine Love is shining through them. But were it otherwise, why should we not lift up our hearts in unfeigned gratitude for numberless blessings, temporal and spiritual, which have been descending upon us every day, hour, and moment during the year? It is comely in Christians in everything to give thanks.

We do well, however, to mingle fear with our praise; to rejoice with trembling to-day. The country of which this State is a component part, is engaged in one of the direst and most disastrous wars known in human history. The existence of a nation of thirty millions of the most free, enterprising, and energetic people on the globe, is imperiled. Our future, which has been looming out so vastly before the world's prospective eye, is at this moment seriously, awfully, at stake. The question of the improbability, if not the impossibility, of a happy issue, agitates profoundly the hearts of not a few: all of all parties are pondering with intensest interest the tendency and results of the colossal struggle.

I propose to offer a few thoughts adapted to inspire hope. Perhaps I may be too sanguine. I shall endeavor not to forget this. I shall at least study moderation, and hope to

be kept from uttering any other words than those of soberness and truth.

Men occupy different positions in surveying the unsearchable movements of Divine Providence. Many fail altogether to discover a Providence in them. In their study of second causes, the first great Cause is excluded or ignored. In such an instance as that now presented by our own country, they discern the plans, purposes, and motives of men: the marshaling, movements, and conflicts of armies and fleets; the cabals, intrigues, quarrels, and jealousies among officials in the state, in the army, in the navy; the surgings to and fro of the waves of political strife; the fermentation of social elements and interests; the wise or the mistaken policies and measures of legislators and commanders; the relations of the war to foreign powers; the resources, energy, and despotic union of the South;—these and such like things are more or less clearly before them, and their conclusions are derived from such balancings and adjustments of the various matters as they may make.

How few embrace in their estimate those philosophical, moral, and religious principles that underlie, quicken, and control the material and political forces which play upon the surface of the struggle!

How few rise above the storm that rages so fiercely about them, and judge of the present in the calm and steady light of the past, discerning those secret and imponderable agencies that attach to race, geographical surroundings, historic associations, national training! How few see the comparative unimportance of local and transient influences which, though at first glance they seem to be bearing all before them, speedily yield before the silent operation of broader and deeper principles!

How few regard the presence and working of superhuman creatures in this mysterious darkness of our national sky! On the one hand, celestial principalities and powers, God's invisible messengers of mercy and of might; and on the other, malign spirits of various orders, who tempt and seduce men to evil, and then guide them in it. Great

crimes are, in their inception, diabolic before they are human. The supreme iniquity, the betrayal of the Son of God, is directly and carefully traced in Scripture to Satan as its source: "The devil having put it into the heart of Judas, Simon's son, to betray him." Lest the better nature of Judas should revolt at the thought of the horrid treachery, and disappoint the invisible instigator, therefore "entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot." The traitor became possessed of the devil. The atrocities of Nero's persecution are likewise represented as the result of the inspiration and management of this same arch enemy of God and man. "Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation." Among all secondary agencies in this unparalleled rebellion, it is not to be doubted that here we have the first.

More especially, how few, in their estimate of this mighty political agitation, consider the existence, divinity, and relations of the Church of Christ, which, whether we apply it or not, is the real key to the mystery—the solver of the awful problem. Doubt it not, my hearers, the issue and the sequel of His shaking in our land will be determined by its bearing on the interests of the Church. You know on whose shoulder rests the government of the nations. How few take note of His immediate and everywhere present agency—an agency supreme and almighty over all agencies, directing and shaping all the elements of the strife, and the destinies of the continent, for His own glory! How few believe that the minds and hearts of all men are in His hand, as clay in the hands of the potter; that at His pleasure He imparts to rulers, legislators, and commanders a spirit of counsel and wisdom and of a sound mind, or sends upon them an evil spirit of delusion and folly! How weak, alas! the faith of our people in an absolute, universal, irresistible, and glorious Providence! How blind are they to the fact that

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them as we may,"

and that this divinity is no other than the great Head of

the Church ! The way of nations, as well as of individuals, is not in themselves. The Lord Jesus directeth their steps. He ruleth by his power for ever. Let not the rebellious peoples exalt themselves. Their diplomacies, their councils, their armies, their navies, their commanders, are under His command. Of Him, and to Him, and through Him, are all things.

No one, my dear hearers, can begin to think rightly of this gigantic rebellion, or forecast its future, who does not follow Bible teaching in regard to it. "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise." In God's light only can we see light ; and we *shall* see light taking our stand-point there. Though thoughtful believers dimly see Him who, even to faith, covereth Himself with clouds and darkness, yet by Biblical illumination they can often catch glimpses of the Divine mind, and discover some outlines of His scheme of eternal providence, the principles and ends of His administration, the means and instruments and secret causes by which, for His own glory, He governs and controls all beings and events. "Thy testimonies are my counselors."

If I was a Millenarian (as the word is technically used) I should be almost in despair of my country. All the pillars of this splendid fabric of human liberty would appear prostrate in my visions of the future ; its foundations would seem to be heaving out of their place, while its benignant Deity would be changed into an avenging Judge. I could only see the hand of God dashing us to pieces as a potter's vessel, dividing the nation not simply into two bitterly hostile parts, but into ten, twenty, or more, making each a prey to other nations, sowing the seeds of new European convulsions—so intensifying the wickedness of mankind and fitting them for sudden and overwhelming destruction by Omnipotent Judgment. I should anticipate the speedy personal return of Christ, and the establishment of His Kingdom on the wreck of the nations, tribes, and families of the earth. The events of the past and present years, the rumbling of the thunder of Divine Power all round the world's horizon, would betoken

ruin, desolation, and woe as the harbingers of the coming of the Son of Man. I should see the Church diminishing, her power weakening, her existence menaced, her faith well-nigh extinguished, and a small remnant saved only by God's "cutting short" His work of judgment.

But on no such scheme can I interpret the Bible. It is most manifest on the very face of Scripture, that God's spiritual kingdom on the earth is one which, beginning in obscurity and on a very limited scale, is to increase, and go on increasing, by a gradual, thorough, widespreading growth. The world of mankind is not to advance in wickedness till it calls for a sudden and overwhelming visitation of Divine wrath; but in one respect at least it is to decrease in wickedness—that is to say, it is to be more and more encroached upon by the Kingdom of Heaven until that kingdom comprehends it all. Severe judgments, local exhibitions of the Divine displeasure, are doubtless to take place—kingdoms and governments to be convulsed and overthrown, and perhaps new empires to arise; but be the changes what they may, they make way for something better. The principles of the Gospel in conflict with man's depravity, no doubt will result, as they have done, in wars, famines, pestilences, in distress of nations with perplexity, fulfilling the word of Christ, "I came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword." But these things will only clear the moral atmosphere, and serve to consolidate and extend the kingdom of Christ. What other meaning can be given to Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the stone cut out of the mountain, which smote the image and became a great mountain and filled the whole earth? What else, too, is the teaching of the parable of the leaven put in three measures of meal, and working till the whole was leavened; and of that other like parable of the mustard-seed, which, though the least of all seeds, grows to be the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof? The world is to be converted; the fullness of the Gentiles is to come in; all Israel are to be saved. The Church, through much tribulation and great

sacrifice, is to take possession of the ends of the earth and all the isles of the sea; the principles of the Gospel are to penetrate and permeate and completely change human life. Zion is to lengthen her cords and to strengthen her stakes. Kings shall be her nursing fathers and their queens her nursing mothers. The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents, the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts; yea, all kings shall bow down before her, all nations shall serve her, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. The commands, promises, and prophecies of the Bible, the prayers and hopes and labors of Christians, all regard this as the grand consummation of the purpose of Christianity. And whatever may be the wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes; whatever the convulsions and changes in dynasties, thrones, states, and nations; whatever the judgments of God upon the beast and the false prophet, these things, so far from restricting the influence and growth of the Church, only settle deeper its foundations and enlarge its boundaries. To this judgment history conforms. The world, on the whole, has grown better, not worse, under the influence of the severity and goodness of God. "Say not concerning the former times that they were better than these." No student of history can fail to see, during the past eighteen centuries, the real progress of mankind in civilization, in art, in science; in the amelioration of the civil and social condition of the masses; in the acknowledgment of human rights and performance of human duties; in virtue, morality, religion, and piety; in the establishment and diffusion of the eternal principles of righteousness. Vast reforms and renovations are yet required, and the progress of the right and the holy is slow, and against stupendous obstacles in the organization of states and communities and in each and every individual human heart, but the fact of signal and most hopeful progress is palpable on the face of modern history.

Along with the just interpretation of Scripture, the interpretation of Providence, so far as we can read this

solemn book, inspires hope for our country from the course and upshot of this war. If we regard the outstretchings of the Divine arm over nations and individuals as having *primary* reference to their sins, if this is our habit of thought concerning the providential judgments of God, the state of our minds may well be one of alarm and terror. Hope will scarcely be able to find anchor ground. Instead of working together with God for the fulfillment of His holy purposes, we shall but seek to hide ourselves till the fury of Divine vengeance be overpast. The conviction of sin against the Most High will exclude thoughts of His mercy, because it is impossible to prescribe the limits of Eternal Justice against human transgression. It is not judgment, with the sense of fear which it awakens, that is most likely to lead to repentance and a better life, but a persuasion of the Divine goodness with its consequent sense of admiration, gratitude, and hope. It is when we regard Providential movements, which inflict widespread desolation and woe, as means in God's hand of fulfilling his eternal counsels of wisdom and of love; it is when we regard them as having other ends than the expression of the Divine displeasure toward suffering individuals or communities—ends of culture, of discipline, of preparation for future service; manifestations of Divine power and wisdom, full of blessed and far-reaching significance—then it is that we lift up our heads in hope, and submissively bear whatever inflictions the Divine glory may require. You cannot but see, if you read the Bible aright, that the uses of Divine judgments are very manifold. Sometimes they are direct punishments of sin. Sometimes they have no such intent, at least on a portion of the sufferers. While every judgment ought to lead to heart-searching and humiliation of soul and watchfulness against sin, it would be a great mistake to interpret all the adversities of life as visitations for sin. In the case of an earthquake, a shipwreck, a pestilence, or a flood, the good and the bad are alike overwhelmed. In the case of the man born blind, our Lord was asked, "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" And he replied, "Neither hath

this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be manifest in him." And He taught the same lesson in connection with the account of the resurrection of Lazarus, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Job, Joseph, and Daniel were the very best men on the earth in their days, and like Christ they suffered, not for themselves, but for the good of others. The overthrow of the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Grecian empires, though in punishment for their sins, had for its main end a preparation for the advent and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. The shaking and removing of these nations opened the portals of Heaven that the Redeemer of the world might come forth. For this purpose did God raise them up and then cast them down. It is not given us, except so far as the Scripture may guide, to trace the mysterious connection between the events of an era and the eternal counsels of Providence. Why *this* or *that* event occurred, may not find its just exposition for hundreds or thousands of years. God moves in mystery: time to Him is the same, whether a day or a thousand years. He is His own interpreter. And the simple question is, whether, in order to estimate aright the Divine dealings with men, we shall stand amid the judgments and terrors of God and look up, or ascend above on the wings of faith, and standing by the side of the Invisible Ruler, look down upon them? Shall we estimate them by sight, or by faith; by reason, or by the Word of God?

This war has a deep and glorious meaning. God has ordered it for wise and good purposes, which it will subserve as surely as God reigns. Let us not be overwise in attempting to determine that meaning. How far it is retributive in its aspect, both on the North and the South, we cannot know. That it ought to lead us to forsake all sin and fulfill all righteousness, is the dictate alike of natural piety and the Bible. "When the host goeth forth against their enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing; for the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy

camp to deliver thee and to give up thine enemies before thee ; therefore shall thy camp be holy ; that He see no unclean thing in thee and turn away from thee."

That it imports the destruction of the nation would be a bold assertion, without Scriptural warrant, the suggestion of blind fear and distrust of God. I cannot but think that the United States had more occasion to tremble in the time of their unsurpassed prosperity, than they now have in the season of their sore adversity. Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth. The language of the prophet Jeremiah is very striking : " Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled upon his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity ; therefore his scent remained in him and his taste is not changed. * * * Behold, the calamity of Moab is near to come, and his affliction hasteth fast." The country is safer to-day than when apparently less imperiled by its insidious enemies. Truth and Justice make headway only by conflict. The world resists the true principles of its own progress. Hence the declaration of Christ already referred to, " I came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword." His battle-cry is, " Prepare war ; wake up the mighty men ; let all the men of war draw near ; let them come up ; beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears ; let the weak say, I am strong ;" and His counsel to all them that love Him, amid wars, famines, pestilence, and earthquakes, is, " See that ye be not troubled." Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

Bearing in mind the principles now stated, let us see whether we may not reasonably, nay, whether we ought not as a matter of duty to indulge hopeful anticipations for our national future.

1. I have already remarked that the world and all nations in it exist and are ruled and governed by God in the interest of and for the advancement of His Church, His kingdom on the earth. This is the secret of all human history, the clew to the vast labyrinth of human life. The advant-

age of the Church, its strength and growth, its gradual possession of power and influence in the world's affairs, and eventual assumption of universal dominion and control, are the objects to which all things national, civil, social, material, scientific, and political are made subservient. Empires with all their diversified interests and relations rise, endure, and pass away wholly for the good of the Church. If it could be shown that these United States were opposed to the Church's advantage and progress, we would at once interpret this war as significant of their speedy dissolution. But no truth in the history of Divine Providence ever declared itself more distinctly than this, that under the protecting favor of the Constitution and organized life of this nation, the Church of Christ has never in all time had so fair an opportunity, such untrammelled liberty, such scope and power to put forth its inborn and sacred energies. Allow me to quote, as pertinent to our circumstances, a few lines from a discourse by Dr. John Owen, delivered before the Parliament of England a little more than two hundred years ago. He states as one of the reasons for the shaking and convulsions, in Divine Providence, of the kingdoms of the earth, "that God by His own wisdom may frame such a power as may best conduce to the carrying on of His own kingdom among men," and remarks, "For the present, the government of the nations (as many of them as are concerned therein) is purely framed for the interest of Anti-Christ. No kind of government in Europe, or line of governors, so ancient but that the Papacy is as old as they, and had a great influence into their constitutions or establishment, to provide that it might be for its own interest. I believe that it will be found a difficult task to name any of the kingdoms of Europe (excepting only that remotest northward) in the setting up and establishment whereof the Pope hath not expressly bargained for his own interest, and provided *that* should have the chiefest place in all the oaths and bonds that were between princes and people." Works, vol. 8, pp. 264-5. Does it not seem as if *ours* was the nation the celebrated Puritan unconsciously

foreshadowed ? Think of the nearly forty thousand churches, with their three million five hundred thousand officers and members, that have here sprung into existence. Think of the Christian and philanthropic institutions they have founded and cherished, pervading the whole land with their benign influence, and reaching forth to the very ends of the earth. Think of the immense power they exert upon the laws, institutions, customs, maxims, habits of the country. We can hardly imagine anything more fatal to the Church's power than the failure of the nation to preserve its being and its future. It surpasses human ingenuity to discover any permanent blessing to the Church of Christ in the destruction of this fabric of government ; and it defies human thought to compass the boundless good that must come to mankind under it. Why, then, should we conclude that this war will have any other effect than that of establishing more firmly than ever the national union and power of this country ?

The objection may possibly suggest itself to some minds that God has a Church in the South, and that the argument which is good for the nation is in a measure, if not equally so, for the States now in rebellion. In reply to this, it is enough to name only a single aspect of the case. A corrupted, apostate Church is the most odious object ever presented to the eye of God. He can bear sin in a nation which He cannot bear in a Church. His jealousy will burn like fire when His Church prostitutes its supernatural prerogatives and virtue to the propagation of organized and atrocious evils. Never let it be, never can it be, forgotten that the avowed object of this fearful war on the part of the South is the preservation, perpetuation, and extension of slavery ; an object, as it seems to us, simply demonic. And no element of strength exists in the rebellious States comparable with that of the Christian Church. And she, including her ministry and membership, has consecrated her whole power of learning, of interpretation, of preaching, and of example, with a terrible unanimity, to the support of this insurrection against the union, laws, and liberties

of the nation. And shall not God visit her for these things? What hope is there in God for the South as a people, when the Church stands in the forefront of the conflict and leads on the States in their madness and sin? The arch traitors themselves seem absolved from their crime, when the sacramental host sanctify and support them in it. The crime is transferred from the people to the Church, which, when left of God, becomes the weakest, blindest, most reckless guide creatures ever trusted. The spectacle of defection in the Southern Church, is the most painful and appalling that has been exhibited during this war, and no one thing is so prophetic of extremest disaster to the South, as the course of each and every denomination of professing Christians in this rebellion.

2. I return to the argument, and remark, secondly: The Church of God, having this supreme interest in the perpetuity of the nation, does it not follow that the wickedness of the people will not determine its destiny, so long as the Church is enshrined in its bosom? The sins of individuals and of officials and their subordinates are certainly great beyond all computation; and if God should be strict to mark our iniquities, and should deal with us as we deserve, we should be swept away with the besom of destruction. Our national sins have been and are varied, willful, and inexcusable. It is madness to cloak them or to refuse to acknowledge them. But we must remember that God does not look for godliness except among the godly. Only real Christians can do anything to please Him. None others can pray to, honor, love, or serve Him. We must not judge the world as we do the Church. God regards the two as essentially dissimilar and separate, and has complacency only in the latter. The unrenewed portions of this nation are endured, favored, and made strong for the sake of the renewed. These are the salt and the light of the country. The appalling wickedness of Sodom was insufficient to destroy it, if ten righteous men had been in it. Yea, the presence of one such man prevented the fires of heaven from consuming it. "I cannot do anything," said God to

Lot, "until thou be come thither" (to Zoar). The crimes of ages, from the days of righteous Abel to Zacharias, concentrated upon Jerusalem, could not sink it into destruction till Christ had removed his Church into the wilderness. No language can exaggerate the safety of a nation where God has a people established, and having a deep and vital connection with it.

Moreover, we must be careful how we transfer the Old Testament threatenings of God against the Jews to our nationality. The two cases are totally distinct. With them the Church and the State were one. The two were exactly identical. The apostasies of the people, were the apostasies of the Church. What one did, the other did. If it had been otherwise—if the nation had fallen into idolatry, and the Church had preserved her purity and integrity—their history would have been vastly different. Threatened wrath, therefore, in their case, may not be applied to ours. My friends, if the interests of God's Church demand the perpetuity of the nation, all the sins of the people, all the corruption in high places, all the miserable ambition and intrigues of politicians, on the one hand, and all the powers of the rebellion, and all the cabinets and crowned heads of Europe, on the other, all combined, can do nothing against us. They will be managed and overruled by the Great Supreme to strengthen and consolidate this free and vigorous nation. The selfishness of the former, and the fury or the envy of the latter, will aptly serve God's gracious purposes. He has not abandoned nor suspended His plan of mercy, which is dependent, not on the righteousness of the Church, nor on the wickedness of the people, but is secured and will be consummated only for His great name's sake.

3. The force of these considerations will be enhanced by recalling the dispensations of God with the population of these States, whereby they became a nation. Here I may not enlarge. Let me briefly suggest (*a*) that, ages ago, when the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, He selected for us this broad expanse of territory, with its peculiar characteristics of climate, soil, mineral

treasures, lakes, gulfs, rivers, mountains, and table-lands, isolated by vast oceans from the rest of the globe: a new world given to a chosen people by the goodness of God in the last dispensation of human history, as far removed, in the nature of their government and institutions, from foreign powers, as these are distant from them in space; for God, who "hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation."

(b) The recency of the discovery of the continent, the history of its colonization, the seven years' struggle of the colonies for independence, and the birth, founding, and wondrous growth of the nation. And (c) the character of the race appointed to possess and control the immense heritage; not the Latin, centralizing and strongly local in their tendencies, but the Anglo-Saxon, migratory and missionary, hardy, energetic, and inventive. The study of these facts is, I think, most inspiring for our national continuance and progress. I pass them, however, to name, in the fourth place:

4. The advanced and Biblical type of the form of our government. I regard the Constitution of these United States as the greatest boon God has vouchsafed to any nation in human history since the Jewish Theocracy. It is more in keeping with the original nature and rights of man than any constitution, written or unwritten, that has ever existed. Every form of government ordained by God among men is ordained on the basis of the supreme selfishness and depravity of the human heart. With the progress of the Gospel by which that selfishness and depravity are modified and restrained, we should naturally expect freer, more advanced modes and forms of civil administration and authority. Looking at this country from the stand-point of Eternal Providence, there is a sublime grandeur in the rapid gathering and multiplication of its people under the benignant and powerful ægis of its simple, unmatched Constitution. With the single exception of the African race, concerning whom God is now having such a tremendous controversy

with the South, for infringing, as against them, the inherent principles of this Constitution, and with the North for permitting such infringement,—with this single case excepted, here every man *is a man*, in the Bible sense of the word. Each human being is, by the fundamental law, recognized as possessing a worth equal to any human being. The divine fact that God has made of one blood all men, permeates and leavens the whole document. The lowliest American is as sovereign as the loftiest. Loyalty with us is not to royalty, but to law. No blood is richer than that which flows in the veins of the tradesman or the artisan. Except for crime, no legal barriers are erected between man and man. Nor blood, nor birth, nor regal gifts of nobility, nor landed estate, can create classes and castes here. The poor and the rich, the high born and the lowly, meet together and are evermore changing places.

So, too, the rights and privileges of every man, whether natural, religious, social, civil, or political, are secured with all the force of the organic law of the nation. “Excelsior,” the motto of our commonwealth, might be written over the doorway of every family in the land. None are held down by the oppressive hand of legalized power. The highest political, judicial, military, naval, literary, and commercial honors are freely offered to every citizen. All may aspire with hope. No laws of entail and primogeniture, no bills of attainder, no hereditary privileges, no rank, in the European sense of these words, are possible. The genius of our liberties lavishes with open hands the treasures of knowledge—providing a good education for the multiplying millions of the population, and establishing freedom of speech and freedom of the press, and, thereby, *freedom of thought*. It gives the largest scope to the religious instincts, preferences, and labors of the people. It throws wide open the channels to wealth and position in life, making integrity, industry, and merit the conditions of success in any sphere. One of its greatest achievements is the complete emancipation of the people from the hierarchies of Europe. The union of Church and State, so fruitful of evils to both,

was perhaps a necessity under feudal and old monarchical institutions, during the transition of the nations from barbarism to civilization. Here they are completely separated, and Religion, divorced from the State, has married Liberty. The pathway to civil honors, emoluments, and office does not lie through the Church. The pure robes of the Bride of Christ are unspotted by contact with worldly pomp and power. As I have before observed, Christianity is more absolutely free and untrammelled in this country than it ever has been since the world began. Mr. Webster has truly said, "This nation is founded on principles which never did prevail to any considerable extent, either at any other time or in any other place." (Works, vol. 3, p. 192.)

Add, moreover, to all this, that the Constitution itself, as a written document, is based on the Bible. I wish the statement of this fact had been made on its forefront. The omission is unhappy, but of no material moment. Its framers were, for the most part, men of high moral and Christian character. The seal and signet of its authority is the Divine Word. Christianity is its inspiration. The Bible is its oath book. The day of the resurrection of Christ is its sacred institute, and its engrossment is a beautiful acknowledgment of the crucified One as our Supreme Sovereign and Lord. And all—in the language of its most consummate expounder—all proclaim that Christianity, general, tolerant Christianity, Christianity independent of sects and parties, that Christianity to which the sword and the fagot are unknown,—general, tolerant Christianity, is the law of the land.

5. One thought more will complete this rapid sketch. It relates to the innocence of the people of the loyal States as to the cause and object of the war. The absurd charge of lust for empire comes with an ill grace from a people who have seized upon the vast domains of Hindostan, owned and peopled by one hundred and fifty millions of inhabitants, to say nothing of China, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. So far as the war itself is concerned, nothing was further from the thoughts of the North. We neither meant it

nor suspected it. It was forced upon us. We had yielded everything to the South which we dared to yield—far more than we ought to have yielded. From the beginning of the government they had had their own way and wishes. Our pusillanimity in not resisting them was our chief sin; not, however, so much against them as against God, posterity, and humanity. No Northern man imagined the leaders in this rebellion capable of such a crime. Many of them occupying the chief seats of national trust and power, with the solemn oaths of office registered in the Book of God against them for the support and defense of the Constitution and Government, were secretly conspiring for their overthrow. The first-fruits of the conspiracy were perjury, robbery, falsehood, and treason; then followed war, with its fearful bloodshed, sickness, sorrow, and desolation. Social, civil, commercial, financial disorganization and ruin impend—possibly servile insurrection, famine, and pestilence. The South have plunged into a frightful abyss, and they have not yet touched its bottom. Their act was not a calmly considered *Revolution*. It was not a bold and open *Rebellion*. It was *Secession*—a word which will hereafter be regarded as more expressive of all that is mean, cowardly, and vile than perhaps any word in any language. And all this in the nineteenth century of Christian progress, in behalf of the most stupendous organic crime of modern times—human chattel slavery. Can it be that a righteous God will prosper them to whom belongs the guilt of this unparalleled, atrocious, Satanic war?

Have we not ground, then, for the hope that God has not created this great nation, founded, strengthened, disciplined, and blessed it, and embosomed and magnified His Church and His Word in it beyond all historic precedent, in order now to destroy it, and set up on its ruins a vast empire founded on an organized crime and devoted to its perpetuity and extension? How can any one who believes in the Supremacy and Providence of God so interpret this war? For, remember that the confident hope we thus indulge arises from no estimate of the patriotism, the virtue,

the wisdom of our rulers, commanders, legislators ; it does not repose upon the vastness of our resources, the magnitude of our armies, the number of our vessels of war, the tenacity and determination of our people ; nor is it abated by the knowledge of the corruption, ambition, weakness, divided counsels, or vacillation of men in high places, nor by defeats, delays, disasters, fearful losses in our armies. But we rest our assurance on the *principles* and *ends* of the Divine Administration among men, revealed to us in the Bible and manifested in the ways and workings of Providence. In this light, can we not indeed see light ? We got not this land in possession by our own sword, neither did our own arm save us ; but God's right hand and His arm and the light of His countenance, because he had a favor unto us ; and thus and only thus shall we retain it.

So that we cannot but think that this great rebellion is to be regarded, *primarily*, not as a judgment of the Lord against us, but as His merciful visitation to save us. What else could have rescued us from the degeneracy and moral corruption into which the whole nation would soon have sunk, under the guidance and inspiration of the slave power ? Reason, honor, right, oaths, the instincts of self-interest, ballots, were all powerless to arrest the onward and downward course of that proud oligarchy, that iron-willed, cruel despotism. This war has revealed the despotic nature, the virulent spirit, which has been gathering its strength during forty years for this rebellion, and has proved itself to be the necessary means of the preservation of our Constitution, Union, and Liberties. Its tendency is to revivify, invigorate, and perpetuate them. Its very magnitude is full of promise. Such a movement of the Merciful Ruler of Nations portends great and benignant results. God, we may be sure, will be thorough in the work He has undertaken. Now that He has begun, He will not cease till He has made an end. The issues will be radical, widespread, and permanent. The nation will be born again. And as Morality and Religion, rather than armies and navies, Right, rather than might, are the true, almost the only conserva-

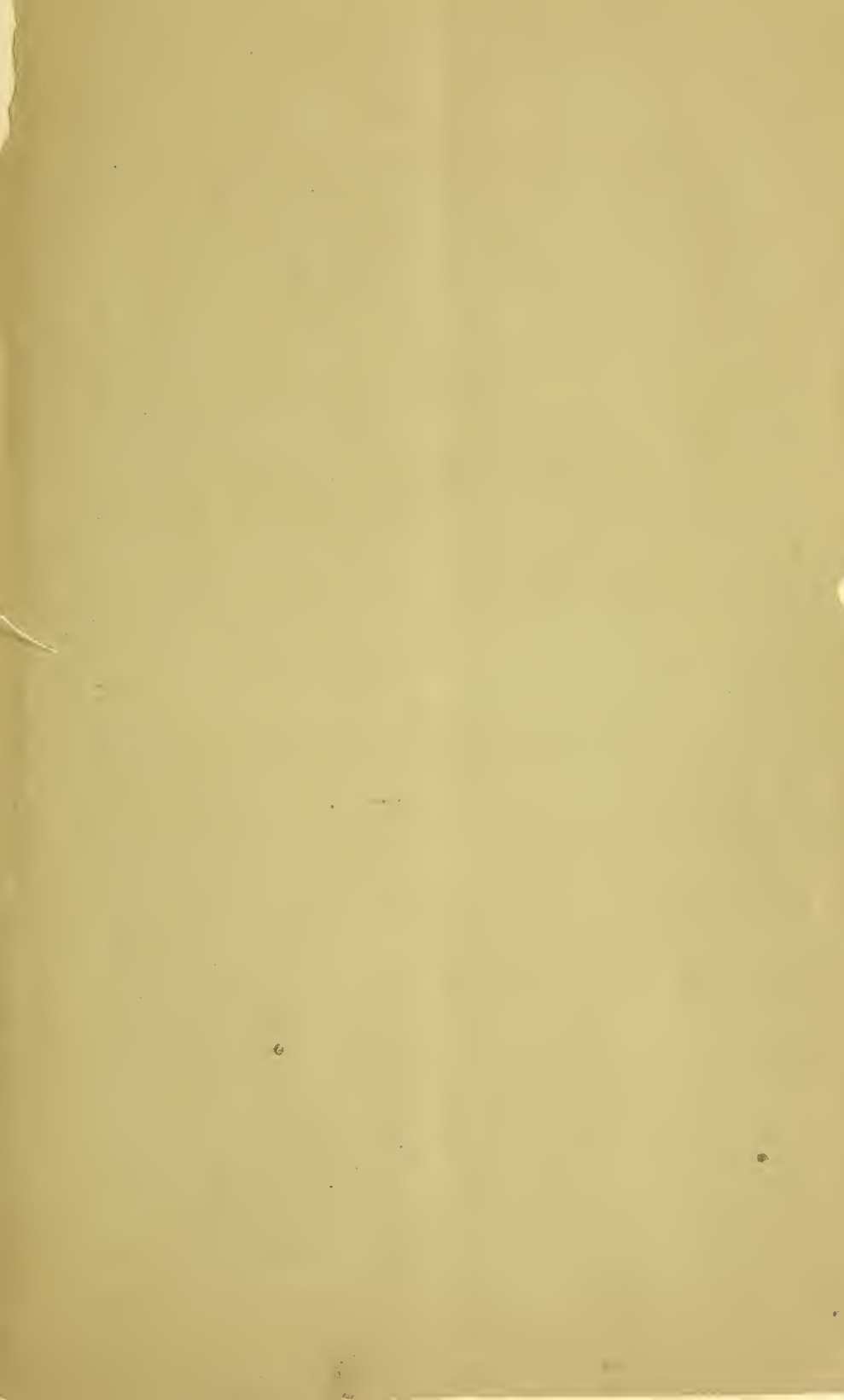
tive and repressive forces—the real balance-wheel of our vast system—is it an unreasonable expectation to indulge, that God, having baptized the nation in blood, will, for His own name's sake, and His Church's sake, baptize it with His grace; that having exorcised the insatiate demon which was consuming the vitals of the state, He will impart His Holy Spirit to our institutions, and make His revived and spreading Church the joy and praise of the land?

Amid wars and rumors of wars, vast battle-fields and terrific carnage, desolation, sorrow, and anguish; amid the deeper conflict of civilizations, social institutions, formative principles and ideas, we need not be troubled for the future. Many most intricate and perplexing questions are presenting and will hereafter present themselves—questions pertaining to the South and to the North, to the white and the black races, to the Constitution and laws of the nation and of the States. With these, however, we have now little concern. God reigns. The war is His war. There is one thing now for us to do, and let us do that with our might. Never had a people a clearer case of duty. A direct command from God could not make it plainer. We must prosecute this war to its legitimate, proper conclusion. We must conquer, crush, annihilate this rebellion by the arm of our military power. Not to do it, is ourselves to turn traitors to God, to posterity, to mankind. We may not, we dare not succumb before the relentless despotism that enchains and magnetizes the revolted States. We dare not make peace with the power that betrayed this people, and sacrificed on its dark altar the hopes of tens of thousands of families. We dare not enter into alliance with this Judas of human liberty. We must fight till his crime in spectre shape pursues him, and compels him to self-destruction; till he goes to his own place; till he plunges into the bottomless abyss of shame and everlasting contempt.

Sad sympathy for the South we ought to feel; for the five millions of degraded, oppressed whites; for the four

millions of slaves ; for the hundreds of thousands of deluded, deceived, impressed mechanics and laborers ; for the remnant of loyal slaveholders ; for their posterity ;—but for the real traitors and conspirators, the hand of Mercy which attempted to arrest that of Justice against them, would be palsied. Therefore, as we look upon the enormous military and naval preparations of the Government, and see their unfaltering and invincible determination to prosecute the war, while there is much we could wish otherwise, we thank God and take courage.

And Thou, Almighty Ruler and Lord of our land, which hast showed us great and sore troubles, oh, quicken us again, and bring us up again from the lowest depths of the earth !



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